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*Consolatory Thoughts upon the Death
of desirable Relations.*

IN A
SERMON
UPON
2 KINGS IV. 26.

By JOHN EVANS.



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TO

Mrs. D E A C L E.

Honoured Madam,

I take the liberty to inscribe the following discourse to your name, since you have done it the honour already of your kind assistance towards its publication from a copy in your custody. Your loss of so many valuable and pious relations within a short compass of time induces me to hope, that it may not be altogether unsuitable for your own support and comfort, in the tender hours when you are thinking over their indearments in life and the present separation between them and you. I know friendship is so strong a principle with you, that you are apt to bear too large a part in the uneasinesses or dangers of those you love while they are living, even to the prejudice of your own health and constitution; and to suffer yourself to be too far impressed at parting. A generous disposition indeed! but which

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needs

iv DEDICATION.

needs the assistance of christian principles so far to qualify it as to prevent its bad effects upon yourself.

I have endeavoured to give a brief representation of some of those principles in the Sermon annexed, and heartily wish they may be assisting to your faith and hope upon such occasions: And shall be glad, if I can usher into the world under your patronage a few plain thoughts, that shall prove useful to any serious christian in so pressing and frequent a calamity of life, as that which is the subject of this Sermon.

That the best of blessings may attend your future life for health of body and prosperity of soul: That your surviving relations may be lasting comforts to you, blessings to their generation, and partakers of the happiness of both worlds; is and shall be the hearty prayer of,

Honoured Madam,

your highly obliged and
very humble servant,

Prescot-street,
March 16. 1726-7.

JOHN EVANS.



2 KINGS iv. 26.

Run now I pray thee to meet her, and say unto her: Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child? and she answer'd, it is well.

I T is necessary I should look a little back to the former part of the chapter for the head of this story. There is mention there, ver. 8. of a woman of considerable note, at whose house the prophet *Elis̄ha* was used to be a frequent guest: She was desirous of his company, out of regard to him as a prophet and a person of eminent holiness; and accordingly ver. 9. with her husband's consent, provided him some accommodations in her house; that he might always lodge there, when he came that way. ver. 10. The prophet had a grateful sense of the kindness shewn him, and understanding she was childless,

childless, question'd not but a child would be very acceptable to her: Upon this thought, it is probable, he used his interest with God to obtain that mercy for her; and we find he was enabled by the spirit of prophecy, to give her assurance of a Son. *ver. 16, 17.* Accordingly she had one in the appointed season. But alas! she is not many years without an afflicting instance of the uncertainty of this earthly comfort. This child of her age is seized with a sudden, violent pain, and dies. *ver. 18, 19, 20.* A sore trial for certain to the bowels of a tender mother; but in this case she resolves to make a journey to the prophet; probably with some hope that by his interest in heaven, he might obtain his recovery from the dead; from whence indeed she formerly received him in a figure. On the way the prophet espies her, and sent his servant to meet her, and orders him to salute her with the questions in the text, *Is it well with thee? Is it well with thy husband? Is it well with the child?* He seems to mean no more by them, but a friendly enquiry about the welfare of her and hers. Her answer is, *It is well.*

Some expositors make no more of this answer than a mere put-off to *Gehazi*, because she would not be hinder'd in prosecuting her journey to *Elisha*, by maintaining

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ing a conversation with *Gehazi*. But tho' we may suppose her to make so short and general an answer for this reason; yet we must apprehend her to speak the truth to him: Her good character gives us reason to believe she made conscience of a lie; nor doth there appear any temptation to be guilty of it here; and therefore we must understand her to affirm it *well*, in a sense consistent with truth. Others therefore read the words, *It will be well*, as importing her expectation of relief from the prophet: But tho' she might have some hope of this, there is no ground in the story to suppose she had a certainty of the child's recovery; and therefore she could not safely affirm it *would* be well upon any other principle but this; that let the issue of her application to the prophet be either a grant or denial of his life, yet she should reckon it well.

It is very reasonable then to understand it, as a pious breathing of her soul under affliction, that while she was in a deep concern (as nature dictates) on the removal of an agreeable relation, yet she deliberately concludes that the divine providence acted well in all. Nor do her expostulations afterwards with the prophet make this improbable. It is no strange thing to find a mixture in her frame upon such an occasion; grace ex-

pressing itself in one turn of thought, and corruption in another. And we may easily by observing the analogy of faith separate these the one from the other ; the *one* for our imitation, as the *other* for our caution.

I reckon this passage therefore may be suitable to the condition of a family, whose circumstances I have an eye to in this discourse ² ; and at the same time may be of general use in this uncertain world, especially in a case that so often occurs, the loss of comfortable relations ; and I think myself warranted to raise this proposition from the words, *viz.*

That when GOD deprives a pious family of agreeable relations, it becomes the survivors to say, It is well.

I mean not, that they should put on a stoical apathy or insensibleness. There is a lawful and commendable expression of affections on such an occasion. Our Lord Jesus himself hath left us an example of weeping for a friend in the case of Lazarus. To lose such enjoyments without any tender resentments, is a branch of the bad description of being *without natural affection*. But I mean, that in such circumstances of life a Christian should not be like

² Where the mistress of the family died in childbed, along with her young child.

the troubled sea, in a perpetual uneasy agitation; but *in patience possess his soul*, and still make this his deliberate conclusion, *that it is well*. And in the case before us this is true; 1. With respect to the concern of divine providence in it. 2. With relation to those that are gone. 3. In reference to the survivors.

I. Let us consider the matter with respect to the concern of divine providence in it. And so, to be sure, we have reason to esteem it well. A good man has something to mind in all events beyond the outward face of them; he regards neither afflictions nor benefits as arising out of the dust, but as proceeding from the hand of God: He believes an universal providence, that *a sparrow's falling to the ground is not without our father*; and much more that he concerns himself in the affairs of mankind; not only of those that make the greatest figure in the world, but of such as live in a private and obscure life; that all our goings, while we are passing over the stage of this world, *are of the Lord*. *Prov. xx. 24.* And therefore much more, the greater events that concern us or ours, our coming into the world and passing out of it. He believes, that God has the keys of death, to dismiss into the unseen state *whom and when*

when he pleases; and that in all instances of this kind, providence has been actually concerned. Now in this view, whatever occurs, it becomes us to say *it is well*; i. e. we can have no ground to complain of GOD for what he has done; and on the contrary, we have reason to conclude, that, all things considered, the matter could not be better ordered than it is.

1. We have no ground to complain of GOD for what he has done, but must say his ways are equal. *I was dumb*, says David, *and open'd not my mouth, because thou didst it.* Psal. xxxix. 9. His *sovereignty* cuts off all pretensions to injustice; he is the absolute Lord of life and death; and therefore who shall say unto him, what dost thou? He has an unquestionable property in us and ours, much more than we can pretend to have in them ourselves. Our comforts are only lent us, and therefore he may recall them at pleasure. *Shall he not do what he will with his own?* Our guilt and provocations must silence all complaints of hard measure in any thing, that befalls us, short of hell; we must say he punishes us far less than our iniquities deserve. A slight observation either of our hearts, or of our ways, may shew us enough in ourselves to justify much severer rebukes than are laid upon us.

Nor is GOD's *faithfulness* to be called in question for such things; because he has never passed his word for the perpetual continuance of any enjoyment of a worldly nature: But when he gives it, reserves it as a secret in his own breast how long it shall remain. Tho' he promises distinguishing blessings to good men, there are none certainly to be depended upon but those of a spiritual and eternal nature: On the contrary, he often calls us to live expecting changes in every period of life, and in every relation.

And his *goodness* is altogether free from imputation; for *love and hatred are not known by these things*. His peculiar favourites have been used in all generations to such affecting instances of the vanity of this world, as much as any others. And beside this, he may very much promote our truest benefit by such providences, while he is introducing our pious relations thro' the valley of the shadow of death to the full fruition of his benignity.

Thus we have always reason to silence murmuring complaints; and not only so, but

2. We have ground always to conclude, that (all things consider'd) the matter could not be better order'd than it is. Possibly in the bitterness of your soul you may be ready to

to say, “ *this is an hard saying*; I can see
 “ reason indeed to be silent and not to
 “ murmur; but can hardly prevail with
 “ my self to carry the thought so far, that
 “ this is the best way that could be taken;
 “ might not another time have been bet-
 “ ter for the removal of a friend? might
 “ not others have been better spared first?”
 But the doctrine of providence will soon
 make us quit all such bold suggestions.
 We may not indeed be able at present to
 account for the fitness of such a step of pro-
 vidence, but must be content to exercise an
 implicite faith: Yet it is a most certain
 truth, which we may always depend upon,
 that as the righteous GOD cannot do an un-
 just thing, so the all-wise GOD cannot do
 an unfit thing, but always what is most
 proper in the present circumstances. We
 may be sure it is best for the government
 of the *whole*, if not for *us*. The great GOD
 frequently has a reach in his providences
 upon us and ours, far beyond ourselves; and
 as long as we are not able to take the full
 compass, we cannot judge of his proceedings.
 And certainly we have too high an opinion
 of our little selves, if we think a greater
 good should be prevented merely to pleasure
 us. Or GOD may design that good for us
 in future time, which we have no apprehen-
 sion of at present, but shall know hereafter.

His

His all-comprehending mind knows the end from the beginning; and when our prospect reaches but a little way, we must be content to suspend our judgment upon particulars, till they come to light. If we have observed the methods of divine conduct, we cannot but have seen this in many former instances; and therefore the more freely may admit the same apprehension of his present dealings; and therefore it is our wisdom to live in resignation to his dispasals beforehand, leaving it with him to do with us or ours what *seemeth good in his sight*; as the expression is, 2 Sam. x. 12. or what *seems meet to him*, as in Jer. xxvii. 5. Very emphatical phrases; importing, that he will never do what seems not good or meet to him; and certainly whatever seems so to him, must necessarily be so.

And of the same temper we should be as to the providences we are now under. Let us ask ourselves, *should it be according to our mind?* Job xxxiv. 33. Ought our judgment, or God's, to take place? May we not be ashamed of the comparison? Only there is this difference between resignation beforehand, and present submission: While we are uncertain what the fixed determination of divine wisdom is in a case, we may with all humility deprecate that which we apprehend would not be best; as *David*

did in reference to the death of his child, 2 Sam. xii. 16, 17. He knew not but God's threatenings were conditional, and therefore with the fervency of an humble suppliant he intreats for the reversing of them; but as soon as God's mind was fully signified by the event, he expresses a full satisfaction, ver. 21. And then indeed he might have *seen* the course God took, best for *his own honour*; that such a sin should not be suffer'd to pass off without some mark of his displeasure: And best for *David* too, as it remov'd out of the way that standing mark of his infamy, the adulterous child.

What has been said on this head gives us reason to conclude in the dark, that such a providence is *well*, tho' we could give no particular account of it: But what I am to say on the other heads, may be submitted to our own serious thoughts, as judges of it. Therefore,

II. Let us consider the case in relation to those that are gone, and we may say it is *well*.

Indeed when there is little hope of the eternal welfare of dead relations, one cannot have all the comfort of this thought as to them: But yet even there we may carry it thus far; since God foresaw a longer

life

life wou'd be of no service to them, it is in a sense *well*, that they continued not to carry their sins to a greater height, that they were not suffered to do more mischief in the world, and to give their pious relations more grief and vexation. And if you have faithfully endeavour'd to do your part to them, you will not be the worse for their misery in another life, whatever they might cost you of tears and sorrow here; they'll give you no more uneasiness, when once you are divested of all earthly affections; you will not want them in heaven, nor find your satisfaction in God lessened by missing their company; and since your work is now done with them, your business is to leave them to God.

But the case in the text refers to such deceased relations as were in covenant with God; and certainly it is well for such, when God takes them to himself. And the just consequence of your esteeming it so is, that, as the apostle says, *you should not sorrow for them as others who have no hope*, 1 Thess. iv. 13.

I shall consider the case distinctly, as to the children of good parents dying in infancy, and as to adult relations who are dead in the Lord.

First, As to the children of good parents dying in infancy, there is reason to con-

clude God hath dealt well with them. And for the comfort of good parents, who often meet with this affliction in a dying world, it may be useful to enlarge upon this.

(1.) There is ground to believe, that the children of pious parents are in covenant with God, and therefore dying in infancy have a place in the heavenly world. When the descendants of good men are allow'd to grow up to maturity themselves, then indeed they come to stand upon their own bottom: If they stand not to the covenant of their fathers, they will be never the better for it, but as *children of Ethiopians unto God*. Amos ix. 7. Their relation to pious ancestors will not exempt them from the wrath of God. Ezek. xviii. 10, 11, 12, 13. But in their infancy, while as yet they know not actual good or evil, all that is necessary to their covenant right is their relation to a *believing parent*: And therefore when God puts them upon no trial of their own, their parents may be as fully assured of their children's salvation, as of their own. How far God may proceed the other way on the side of severity with the infant seed of *unbelievers*, we cannot pretend to say; but must leave them to the sovereign mercy of God; for he has not declared in his constitution how he will deal with them. But

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he has signified his mind as to the seed of the righteous, when he says, Gen. xvii. 7. *I will be a God to thee and to thy seed.* Now we may clearly argue from that for their salvation dying in infancy. The same which the apostle says of the ancient patriarchs, we may say concerning such children, *God would be ashamed to be called their God, if he had not prepared for them a city.* Heb. xi. 16. He would never have asserted himself with such emphasis to be in a special relation to them, if the great name [*their God*] signified nothing to them; if there was no difference to be made between them and others, to whom he was not a God in covenant. Now in this life there is no such difference made; and therefore, since he stiles himself *their God*, as being the *God of their parents*, if he removes them when they are capable of being considered no otherwise than as parts of their parents, it is certain he takes them to himself; which is further confirmed from our Lord's own words, Mat. xix. 14. *Of such is the kingdom of heaven.*

(2.) If they are taken to heaven, it is certain they are much happier than their parents could make them here. You are concerned to provide your children a good portion; and surely if God will be their portion for ever, it is far better than if you could be-

bequeath them all the wealth in the world. The apostle makes the difference between saints in *this* and the *other* world, to be as that of a child to a grown man. 1 Cor. xiii. 11. Can any of you, that wish well to your children, be sorry that they are *men* too soon? What treasures can you lay up for them, like those which *moth and rust cannot corrupt, and whither thief cannot break thro' and steal?* Ay, but you will say, I could be glad to have them with me. But is it not better for them to be with Christ? Your poor babes, while with you, are capable of little, and they would be a long time training up for any thing considerable: But above there is no infant of days or understanding; they have no bodily organs, that require time of preparation, before they can give expressions of reason. If they die children, they shall rise men; and in the mean time are far happier than they could be here.

(3.) They are got above the reach of all afflictions. Since sin has enter'd into the world, this is a stage of trouble: We enter upon it crying, and while we are passing over it, vanity and vexation of spirit appear written upon it; and every one has some instances of that vanity for his share. Possibly your infants, if they had lived, might have had their passage imbarred, by lingring diseases or tedious pains; either

either hereditary, as the stone and gout are to some, or occasional in the course of future events: Or by shocking disappointments in their outward affairs they might have been reduced to want and penury, tho' you may be capable of leaving them a plentiful estate. Or it may be, if they had grown up, they might meet with some turn in the brain to disorder their reason, so as to make them unserviceable to the world, and a grief and burden to all about them. How many such calamities might, for ought you know, have overtaken them, if their lives had been prolong'd, which by their early translation are all prevented? *If they die from the womb, and give up the ghost when they come out of the belly, they lie still and are quiet, and shall be at rest, where the wicked cease from troubling.* Job iii. 11, 13, 17. The tenderest relations, by seeing the sore afflictions and racking pains of those that were dear to them, have been brought to choose death for them rather than life.

(4.) They are entirely secured from all danger of worldly temptation. When one looks abroad into the world, and sees the many snares that youth run into, the fatal shipwrecks of promising beginnings which some make, even of the seed of good men, that had been early dedicated to God, and

by a good education escaped the pollutions that are in the world, how many of these are entangled again therein: When, I say, a good parent considers this, I am sure he shou'd not think it the disadvantage of his child, that GOD has taken him from the evil to come, and rescued him early out of the snares of a present evil world. May you not justly esteem it well for your child, to be taken away with a covenant security for his welfare; when you know not what he might have proved, if he had come to a trial of his own? I dare say any pious parent had rather his child should be laid young in his grave, than be an *accursed sinner of an hundred years old.* Isa. lxv. 20. The great GOD is infinitely wise, and possibly might foresee great dangers in your child's way, if he had enter'd upon the snares of the world: And whether GOD succour us in temptation, or stave it off from us, or remove us out of the way of it, his *goodness* is to be acknowledged, and not his *pleasure* disputed.

Secondly, As to such relations, who lived to give good evidence themselves of their own consent to GOD's covenant; to be sure there is reason to say, it is *well* for them. Besides that several things which have been said of infants are equally applicable to them; it may be further consider'd,

As

As *saints*, their hearts were on a better country, *they desired the heavenly one*, Heb. xi. 16. They were but from home in the body; for the heaven-born principle in them aspired towards the world to come; for certain they *would not live here always*, if it was left to their choice. Job vii. 16. And if you are born from above, you agree with them in the same judgment, for them as well as for yourselves; you would not wish this should be their perpetual abode: They and you have had an affecting sense of the insufficiency of this world for a portion; and a persuasion in the general, that *to depart and be with CHRIST is far better*. You know this world is a state of toilsom labour, of shocking disappointments to all; it may be, it has been peculiarly so to your friends, by grinding pains or acute distempers or frequent ailings, or by being emptied from vessel to vessel: The *other* world you are persuaded is a state of rest from such labours and uneasiness; and you cannot be such ill friends to them, as to wish they should be always kept from rest. Besides, the *present* state was imbitter'd by many conflicts with their spiritual enemies, many desertions of GOD, various insults of their own corruptions: But when they arrive at the *other*, their warfare is perfectly accomplish'd; there are

no interruptions in the enjoyment of GOD, nor any remains of sin; so that upon the whole, you cannot deliberately think it would be well for them to have their removal always suspended. All the exception then, that carries any plausible appearance, must come to this; that tho' you wou'd not have them for ever here any more than yourselves, yet might it not have been better to have continued a little longer below? I may answer in the general, what I dare say they would declare to be their mind now, if you were within reach, that this was the best time, because it was what GOD chose. But more particularly,

If they were far *advanced in years*, you had no reason to expect that they shou'd hold out long in the course of nature. If they died in *middle age*, yet they had time to do some service to the world before they left it; and GOD will reward their endeavours, as far as he gave them a season for them; and for certain they are no losers by slipping over that time of life, which is commonly but labour and sorrow. Yet farther, suppose them cut off in the vigour of their *youth*; whatever the world may lose of what it promised itself from them, yet their excellencies are not lost by an early death. If they were eminently religious betimes,

betimes, they shall neither lose the use nor the reward of their improv'd faculties, because they had not the opportunity here to do all that was in their hearts for GOD. Possibly they may be taken away from evils to come, either upon the church of GOD, or upon their own families and friends: But for certain, they are taken to the heavenly glory; and the sooner they are admitted to that, the better for them. In short, they are fully pleased themselves with the exchange, and wou'd by no means wish to be down again with the best friends upon earth.

III. If we consider the matter yet farther with reference to surviving pious friends and relations; even they have reason to say, *it is well.*

(1.) They have reason to say so, *notwithstanding* the removal of such desirable enjoyments. In an imperfect state we ought to balance circumstances, where we cannot expect every thing to be according to our mind. To this end I may put the following inquiries.

Do not you enjoy many other mercies, tho' this be taken away? If GOD hath removed *some*, yet he hath left *many* others, when he might have resumed *all*. Possibly the good woman in the text might have some

eye to this; “ *It is well*; tho’ my child be
 “ dead, since my husband is spared to me,
 “ since he and I are in health, and sur-
 “ rounded with many comforts.” It’s very
 unbecoming us to be of *Haman’s* temper;
All this availeth me nothing, so long as I
see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king’s
gate; to overlook all our mercies, because
 we have not every thing that we desire:
 You shou’d rather on such an occasion adore
 God’s goodness, that he has left you other
 valuable comforts, when he had the same
 right and power to strip you of them. Hath
 he taken one or more dear relation from
 you? You may say, yet he *has* not quite
put lover and friend far from me, nor removed
all mine acquaintance into darkness; he hath
 not made a thorough end.

Have you not a surer tenure for more
 important blessings? You have a more cer-
 tain and fixed relation to GOD. *When fa-*
ther and mother forsake me, then God will
take me up. Psal. xxvii. 10. If you lose a
 comfort, if you lose them all, yet you lose
 not your GOD. If he is yours, he hath
given you a name better than that of sons
and daughters; an everlasting name, that
shall not be cut off. Isa. lvi. 5. You have a
 covenant security for his favour, an interest
 in his promises, a title to his kingdom.
 And if you have all that GOD covenanted

to give you well-secured, certainly you may say, *it is well* still. As under the sinful disorders of a family, so in all the afflictive alterations made in it, a good man shou'd rejoice with *David*, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. *Altho' my house be not so with GOD, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, order'd in all things and sure.*

Yea, had they not finish'd all the service to you, of which GOD had designed them to be the instruments, before they were removed? It is certain they had: I mean not as to the fruit and effect of it; that may be still abiding, after they are laid in their graves. But they had finish'd all that GOD intended them to do in order to the benefit of you and others, before they quitted the stage. They had *finished the work which GOD gave them to do*: And surely you wou'd not desire to have had them here altogether useless!

(2.) Their removal may contribute to the spiritual advantage of survivors. A Christian, if he be not wanting to himself, may say in this case as St. *Paul* of his persecution, Phil. i. 29. *I know that this shall turn to my salvation, thro' the supplies of the spirit of Jesus Christ*: Or as *David*, Psal. cxix. 71. *It is good for me, that I have been afflicted.*

It is fit to give those left behind a more affecting conviction of the vanity of the world: We hear much of this, and see many instances of it; and yet, GOD knows, commonly are but little moved, till it comes close to our own case, till we feel this lesson as well as hear it. And what apter means to teach you this, than when you lose a part of yourselves? when the delight of your eyes is taken away with a stroke?

It is a proper *memento* to prepare for their own death. “ My other half, or the fruit of my body, is gone into eternity, and I shall not be long after. *I shall go to them, but they shall not return to me.*” Sam. xii. 23. The stroke might have been level’d at me, as well as them, or instead of them; and for ought I know it may reach me next: *Lord, therefore make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days what it is, that I may know how frail I am.* Psal. xxxix. 4.

It may excite them that remain to the more diligent discharge of their duty to surviving relatives. You have a sensible evidence, that they may be taken from you ere you are aware; and they will be out of the reach of your prayers and endeavours, when once they have shot the gulph.

It may more effectually engage the living to an imitation of them, where they were good

good examples. Death gives an accent to all that was lovely in them ; upon such an occasion it is natural to look back on their characters ; and it will be happy if survivors strike in with the remembrance of this, so as to go and do likewise.

And lastly ; It may prepare them in a christian manner to part with other friends and relations. Indeed if corruption be hearkened to as monitor in the case, the loss of one will increase your reluctance to part with another. But a serious mind will make a different use of it, to fit the looser from all earthly comforts. " Some " are gone, others are going, therefore I " must live expecting changes. Why shou'd " I fall out with my GOD by the way for " such occurrences, which he hath been " long training me up for, and suiting my " spirit to ? "

Thus it is capable of being improved many ways to serve our best interests.

(3.) Whatever prejudice may arise from their removal at present, *all will be well* at the next meeting of pious friends and relations. The separation is not to be perpetual : And tho' we should not be able, as long as we live, to review former endearments without a pathetical concern ; yet there shall be a joyful meeting, when all tears shall be wiped away. And how grateful will be

be the surprize on both sides to find one another so vastly improv'd beyond what the warmest affection could discover at the time of their separation! How chearfully will they join together in the triumphs of heaven, who often united their prayers here to God in the heavens! How delightful their mutual converse, who can say they have been mutual helps in the way to that world! Tho' the loss of such a companion now may be a melancholy thought at parting, that reunion will make full amends without the danger of another separation.

Some practical inferences shall conclude this discourse.

1. How much shall we consult our own interest by strengthening our faith in the universality and equity of divine providence! All of us in this world are subject to a variety of afflictions, and in any of them the principal rest we can have for our minds is from the consideration of the divine government of the world and of all things in it. This may give a smooth face to the roughest event, and answer objections in such dark occurrences as we cannot solve any other way. This will calm the mind, when nothing else can. We cannot help being frequently tossed upon a tempestuous sea in this world, unless we cast anchor here. And therefore we cannot better consult our comfort

fort as well as our duty, than by confirming our faith and exercising our thoughts about this great doctrine.

2. You may collect the unspeakable happiness of real saints. *All things work together for their good.* Whatever comes to pass, is well for them, or *shall be* so in the end: Prosperity or adversity, life or death, their own death or the death of their friends. Possibly under dark apprehensions they are saying with *Jacob*, Gen. xlii. 36. *All these things are against me:* When either they are quite otherwise, and they come to discern it in a little time: Or if they are in some respect against them, as testimonies of divine displeasure for their sins, yet they are but fatherly corrections, and *shall have* a good issue. Oh that this might persuade all of you to enter into God's covenant! Then all would be well. While you remain at a distance from him, it may be you are making as wrong a conclusion on the other hand, as *Jacob* did on the desponding side; ready to say, because you are in prosperity, *all these things are for me.* But without repentance you will find it quite otherwise. And when you come to be pressed with close afflictions, what shall be your support? especially when you come to the valley of the shadow of death yourselves?

3. See you carry yourselves so in your several relations that you may have solid comfort when you come to parting; whether to leave your friends behind you, or to see them going before. That if you die first, you may have this rejoicing, that it shall be well with you for ever, and you have faithfully endeavour'd to fill up your place, while you remain'd with them: Or when you see them leaving you, you may have this support, that you endeavour'd to discharge your duty to them; and whatever the success be, yet their souls shall not be required at your hands. Husbands and wives, masters and servants, parents and children, ministers and people; let us all see to this, that we are diligent in our duty to each other, knowing the time is short, and this will give us the most agreeable reflection at a time of parting.

4. Liye in expectation of changes, and prepare for them. To expect them will itself be no small preparation for them; and it will quicken you to all the instances of a proper readiness. Look abroad and see what daily occurs in other families; remember what have been in your own. Be instructed by the warnings you have in yourselves or yours, by distempers and weaknesses. Consider what your bibles teach you to expect. And in your highest prosperity think

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of parting, and take heed of such inordinate affections as shall make you unwilling to resign at GOD's call.

5. Let christians shew the strength of christian principles and supports in their behaviour under afflictions; and particularly this of the loss of dear relations. Shew the world you have something to bear you up which they have not; that you give not up your friends for lost who are dead in the Lord, nor give up yourselves for lost as long as your GOD and Redeemer live. Let it make you easy, when you can hope they are gone to GOD, and know that GOD and his covenant are not gone with them.

This I would recommend to you, that are deprived of a tender confort and the fruit of her womb at once. Tho' it is a stroke in the tenderest part; yet it is by the hand of a GOD, and I trust *your GOD*. Shew your affection to her now by your complacency in her welfare, as our Lord tells his disciples they should do for him. *If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go to my Father.* If the weaker sex could say here, it is well; it may justly be expected from you. If under the darker dispensation of the *Jews* she was of this temper, you have more reason to be so under the gospel, wherein *life and immortality are more fully brought to light.* And as long as you and your chil-

dren are in God's hands, and under his care, you may still rejoice in that as more durable, than the most suitable relative in this world could be.

6. See that such providences be improved to your spiritual advantage. Learn more affectingly what the world is in this glafs, how uncertain its comforts, how unstable its settlements, how insufficient it is for a portion. See what yourselves must come to; *That is the end of all men, and the living should lay it to heart.* Death, you see, passes upon all, even those that have not sinned after the similitude of *Adam's* transgression, by actual sin. Do you the surviving parent be faithful in the religious instruction of your children, when the whole work is devolved upon you. I have heard you say, she that is gone us'd to bear a great part in that work; go you and do likewise. In that (and whatever else was praise-worthy) follow her steps. And to conclude, resign up your all to God, as one ready for the whole of his good and acceptable will, so that whatever he shall yet do with you or yours, you may say, *it is well.*



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